

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 6937

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: AQUINO CASE UPDATE

REF: A) MANILA 6631 B) MANILA 6412

BEGIN SUMMARY: PERPETUATION HEARINGS HAVE TAKEN MORE SENSATIONAL TURN WITH PUBLIC EXHIBITION OF WEAPONS AQUINO ALLEGEDLY STOCK-PILING TO FIGHT GOVERNMENT AFTER MARTIAL LAW DECLARED AND OBLIQUE SUGGESTION BY STATE WITNESS AQUINO MAY HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR PLAZA MIRANDA INCIDENT. ACCORDING TO MEDICAL AUTHORITIES, AQUINO NOW TAKING LIGHT SOLIDS AND MAKING GOOD RECOVERY FROM EFFECTS OF PROLONGED FAST. END SUMMARY.

1. AQUINO CASE PERPETUATION HEARINGS CONTINUING THIS WEEK ARE FOCUSING ON CHARGE OF ILLEGAL POSSESSION OF FIREARMS. AQUINO IS NOT PRESENT. STATE WITNESS HAS BEEN ROSENDO CAWIGAN, AQUINO'S APPOINTMENTS SECRETARY AND SECURITY CHIEF FROM JAN 1969 UNTIL MARTIAL LAW. CAWIGAN TESTIFIED AQUINO HAD BEEN STOCKING HIGH-POWERED FIREARMS INCLUDING MACHINE GUNS AND HAND GRENADES IN BASEMENT OF HIS HOUSE IN QUEZON CITY ALONG WITH MEDICAL SUPPLIES AND FOOD. HE SAID AQUINO ANTICIPATED DECLARATION OF MARTIAL LAW AND HAD ASSEMBLED WEAPONS TO FIGHT GOVERNMENT. AQUINO ALSO ALLEGED TO HAVE SAID THAT IF WORSE CAME TO WORST, HE WOULD LEAD ARMED OPPOSITION TO GOVERNMENT IN MINDANAO WHERE HE HAD MANY FRIENDS AND SYMPATHIZERS. DURING SESSION MAY 20, CAWIGAN IDENTIFIED TWO PROMINENT FORMER POLITICIANS AS SUPPLIERS OF FIREARMS TO AQUINO. THEY

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WERE CONGRESSMAN REQUE ABLAN, OF ILOCOS NORTE AND SEN. RAMON MITRA OF PALAWAN. DAILY EXPRESS OF MAY 20 CARRIED FRONT-PAGE COLOR PHOTO OF CAWIGAN IDENTIFYING VARIETY OF FIREARMS OWNED BY AQUINO INCLUDING M-60'S AND UZIS.

2. CAWIGAN ALSO DISCUSSED AQUINO'S FAILURE ATTEND LIBERAL PARTY MEETING AT PLAZA MIRANDA ON 21 AUG 1971. ACCORDING TO CAWIGAN, AQUINO'S FAILURE TO APPEAR WAS MOST UNUSUAL. CAWIGAN TESTIFIED THAT WHILE HE AND SENATOR WERE ATTENDING ANOTHER FUNCTION, AQUINO WANTED PERIODIC REPORTS ON WHAT WAS HAPPENING AT PLAZA MIRANDA. HE HEARD NEWS OF BOMBING OVER RADIO, WHILE ENROUTE TO HIS RESIDENCE IN QUEZON CITY. THERE HE BRIEFLY WATCHED TV COVERAGE AND THEN RUSHED TO HOSPITAL TO VISIT INJURED.

3. DOCTOR, WHO HAS BEEN IN CONTACT WITH NURSE ATTENDING AQUINO AT VETERANS HOSPITAL, REPORTS THAT AFTER PERIOD TAKING CHICKEN BROTH, SENATOR IS NOW ON LIGHT SOLIDS. HE IS DESCRIBED AS MOST COOPERATIVE, DOING VERY WELL AND RECOVERING FROM EFFECTS OF HIS LONG FAST.

4. COMMENT: GOVERNMENT HAS APPARENTLY DECIDED TO ENLIVEN INCREASINGLY LISTLESS PERPETUATION HEARINGS BY FOCUSING PUBLIC ATTENTION ON CACHE OF ARMS AQUINO HAD STORED AWAY AND IDENTIFYING SOME OF HIS BIG NAME ARMS SUPPLIERS. TESTIMONY ON AQUINO ACTIVITIES NIGHT OF STILL-UNSOLVED PLAZA MIRANDA INCIDENT SEEMS DESIGNED SUGGEST AQUINO SOMEHOW INVOLVED IN OR EVEN RESPONSIBLE FOR BOMBING. WITNESS' STATEMENT THAT AQUINO WAS ALSO CONSIDERING LEADING ARMED GROUP IN MINDANAO, WHERE HE ALLEGEDLY HAS MANY FRIENDS AND SYMPATHIZERS, MAY BE EFFORT TO SUGGEST CONNECTION (NO MATTER HOW PREPOSTEROUS THIS SEEMS ON ITS FACE) BETWEEN AQUINO AND MINDANAO DISSIDENTS.

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